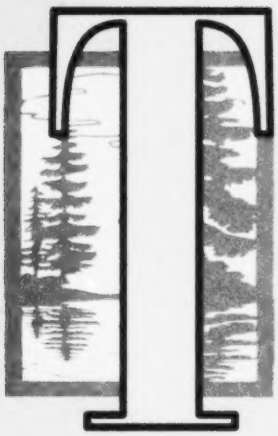
Saskatchewan's Representative Areas Network



he Landscape is Changing ...

Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM) is leading the establishment of a network of ecologically important land and water areas across the province. This system started with a base of sites totalling nearly 3 million hectares (7.4 million acres) including national and provincial parks, wildlife refuges, ecological and other reserves in the province. Working from this solid foundation, Saskatchewan's Representative Areas Network has expanded by more than 50 per cent in less than two years!

Representative areas are intended to serve two main purposes:

- as benchmarks or long-term reference points against which we can compare the impact of management practices being applied outside of the Network; and
- to help conserve samples of the range of biodiversity found in Saskatchewan.

If we are properly maintaining healthy ecosystems through our management practices, representative areas will confirm this. More importantly, if our management practices are destroying ecosystems, the Representative Areas Network will serve as an "early-warning" mechanism so steps can be taken to correct our actions and restore ecosystem health over the long term.

"Wilderness is a resource which can shrink, but not grow; invasions can be arrested or modified in a manner to keep an area usable either for recreation, or for science, or for wildlife, but the creation of new wilderness in the full sense of the word is impossible."

—Aldo Leopold

Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management

Progress Report March 1999

Network Additions . . .

From August, 1997 to March 31, 1998, more than 1.3 million hectares (3.3 million acres) of land were added to the Representative Areas Network through designations of Crown-administered lands and a number of partnership agreements with non-government agencies. (See SERM's March 1998 Progress Report for more information).

Further additions were made to the Network during the period April 1, 1998 to March 31, 1999:

- **April, 1998:** Designation of the 57 hectare (141 acre) MacDowall Bog Protected Area. This small but unique site lying south of Prince Albert contains numerous provincially and nationally rare plant species, as well as an unusually high number and variety of orchids.
- **April, 1998:** Douglas Provincial Park was expanded by 1,300 hectares (3,200 acres). This expansion protects native grasslands supporting prairie-nesting birds such as burrowing owls and one of the province's largest piping plover populations.
- **February, 1999:** Designation of 67,715 hectare (167,321 acre) Wapawekka Hills Representative Area. Lying south of La Ronge, this rugged and pristine wilderness contains unique geological features and a diverse abundance of wildlife, trees, rare plants and water. The site also holds traditional cultural values for local Aboriginal people.
- **February, 1999:** Designated 177,921 hectares (439,637 acres) within the Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area. This black spruce-tamarack lowland area lying just south of Deschambault Lake is typical of the Mid-Boreal Lowland Ecoregion. It is also home to a variety of wildlife, including the great grey owl and the provincially protected woodland caribou.
- **February, 1999:** Entered into a partnership agreement with the Canadian Wildlife Service covering 10 Migratory Bird Sanctuaries (54,390 hectares/134,398 acres) situated throughout south and central Saskatchewan. The agreement recognizes the valuable contribution of wetlands and uplands to the Network, and provides a framework for a cooperative long-term relationship between the two parties to promote conservation and the continued wise use of these lands.
- **February, 1999:** Concluded a partnership agreement with the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan - Rocanville, covering 1,489 hectares (3,680 acres) of open grasslands and aspen bluffs. The agreement allows the parties to work together to continue to conserve the land's biological diversity. It also recognizes the land's contribution to the Network as part of a larger corridor extending along the eastern Qu'Appelle River that provides protection for songbirds and wildlife in an area that has otherwise been developed for agricultural purposes.
- **February, 1999:** Endorsed a partnership agreement with Canadian Forces Detachment - Dundurn recognizing the ecological integrity and biological diversity in the 22,000 hectare (54,362 acre) Dundurn Camp. This site is home to a diversity of mammals, birds and plants in a rich mixture of open grassland, shrub/grass communities and poplar stands. Many of these species are classified as rare, endangered or vulnerable.
- **Throughout the Year:** Secured 12 conservation easements covering 1,219 hectares (3,011 acres) of privately owned prairie grassland areas throughout southern and central Saskatchewan. Easement agreements ensure that the land will remain in its natural state supporting a variety of wildlife, birds and plants.

In total, new additions to the Representative Areas Network since 1997 now amount to more than 1.6 million hectares (4.1 million acres)!

Land Status . . .

The Representative Areas Network is very flexible in the tools that can be applied to ensure the ecological values within an area are conserved. In general, resource management responsibility depends on ownership of the lands being protected.

- **Crown Lands:** Lands administered by SERM may be managed according to any one of a number of legislative options. Depending upon the resource and ecological values to be protected and the level of use to be continued with the site, a Crown land representative area may be formally designated pursuant to *The Ecological Reserves Act*, *The Parks Act* (provincial parks and protected areas) or *The Wildlife Act* (game preserves, wildlife management units and wildlife refuges). Designation usually includes establishment of a Board for each site to advise SERM about its ongoing management. However, SERM continues to be responsible for long-term management of Crown land sites and the resources found therein.
- **Private Lands and Lands not Administered by SERM:** Lands that are not directly administered by SERM on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan are also important to the Network. By entering into joint Partnership Agreements, Memoranda of Understanding or Conservation Easements, SERM is provided an opportunity to work closely with its partners to help guide management of these lands in a way that will ensure maintenance of the long-term health of the soil, water, plants, animals and other organisms that make up the ecosystem. In return, SERM benefits by having access to these lands and resources for education and research purposes. Overall responsibility for long-term management of private lands and lands not administered by the Provincial Crown continues to rest with the land-owning agency or individual. Working together with other partners and landowners also helps to support the province's commitment to co-operative and community-based protection of the environment.

The actual designation or management tool applied to any area is not of primary consideration in the Representative Areas Network. Any land or waters for which the legal regulations, policies or other agreements provide a long-term commitment for maintenance or enhancement of ecological integrity can be recognized within the Network.

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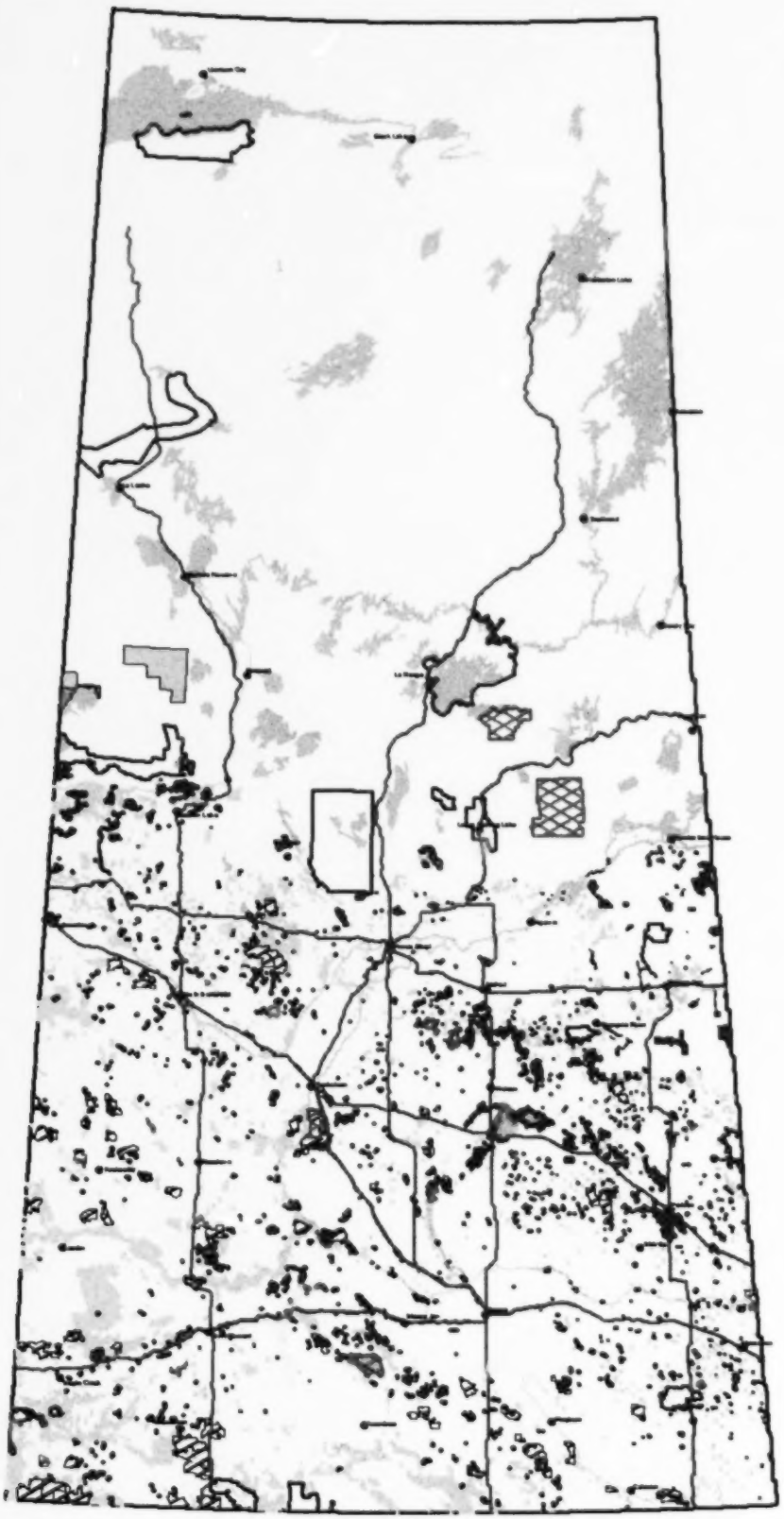

Representative Areas Network

Designations 1998 - 1999

- Wapawekka Hills Representative Area
- Seager Wheeler Lake Representative Area
- CWS Migratory Bird Sanctuaries
- PCS Rocanville Site
- CFD Dundurn Site
- Macdowall Bog
- Douglas Park Expansion

Previously Designated

- Cities/Towns
- Wildlife Refuges
- Ecological Reserves
- Parkland Reserves
- Redberry Lake Bird Sanctuary
- National Parks
- Provincial Parks
- PFRA Lands
- Water Bodies
- Conservation Easements
- Ducks Unlimited Lands
- WHPA Lands
- SWCC Lands
- WDF Lands

This map is to be used for graphical representation only.
This is not a legal document.

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50 0 50 100 150 200 Kilometers

Protecting the Land and Enjoying its Bounty ...

The Representative Areas Network program strives for a balance between ecological, economic, cultural and recreational needs. We believe it is important to preserve our wilderness, but it's just as important to be able to enjoy it!

In some areas, human activities and access may be limited in order to ensure threatened or endangered species or fragile features can be protected. In most sites, however, multiple land use objectives are applied. Often, when large areas containing a diversity of features and resources are being designated, a greater number of uses and activities can occur with little or no impact to the ecological values of the site. In general, activities like recreational hunting, fishing, trapping or hiking can occur. As well, grazing of prairie grasslands is appropriate as long as sustainable grazing rates are developed and adhered to.

Traditional aboriginal uses will be unaffected by designation as a representative area. In fact, inclusion within the Network can often help to preserve important features and culturally-based uses of the land that have been a part of the traditional aboriginal lifestyle for generations.

More intensive uses like commercial timber harvesting or mineral extraction can be disruptive to the landscape. When selecting new representative areas, every effort will be made to identify sites where these types of activities are not occurring, or where agreement can be reached as to their cessation or adjustment in order that the overall ecological impact can be minimized.

Feedback from local users and interest groups will help guide SERM in determining the kinds and levels of acceptable activities, along with scientific analysis and information obtained from studying individual sites.

Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management

What the Future Holds ...

The Government of Saskatchewan remains committed to completing identification and designation of sites within each of the province's 11 ecoregions by the end of the year 2000. This will ensure the Government meets its commitments to the rest of Canada to help complete a national network of protected areas.

Designations of Crown lands and negotiation of partnership agreements for other lands will continue throughout 1999 and 2000. Many of the sites to be designated are already under discussion with stakeholders, interest groups, First Nations, local community residents and area users.

"The land, the earth that we live on, is not ours. It belongs to everyone, and those who are living here now are the guardians of that earth."
—Sir Richard Attenborough

SERM will continue to actively seek public advice and support for finalizing the location of representative areas and the types of activities or uses that should be continued within them. Additional effort will also be directed towards educational activities to support ecosystem-based management principles and highlight the importance of biodiversity preservation within and outside of representative areas.

Long-term management plans will be developed for each representative area outlining the most appropriate ways and means of ensuring valuable ecological resources are conserved for future generations to enjoy and benefit from. The role of individual sites as benchmarks for monitoring ecosystem health will also be outlined within these comprehensive management plans.

The next important step in the Representative Areas Network program will be in living up to the challenge of caring for sites to ensure their beauty, distinctiveness and wealth of resources continue to endure for future generations to enjoy as part of ***our living landscape***.

For More Information:

If you would like to learn more about the Representative Areas Network in Saskatchewan, or if you have comments or suggestions that will assist our efforts, please contact:

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